



# If I live a moral life and have good works, am I saved?

Sixbert SANGWA, PhD • October 07, 2023

Some religions have, throughout history, taught their followers that salvation is achieved through good words or acts of contrition and that living a moral life is the way to atone for our sins. This was the issue Paul faced in the Antioch and Galatian churches which taught that believers must follow the Old Testament law, specifically regarding circumcision, in order to be saved, but Paul unequivocally exhorted that a "gospel" of grace and works is false ([Acts 15](#); [Galatians 1:6–9](#)). Even today, many [even genuine] Christians have a misunderstanding of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. On the one hand, hyper-grace teachers mislead believers into believing that all sins, past, present, and future, have already been forgiven, so that the believer is no longer responsible for his or her sins. On the other hand, false teachers also misuse the Bible to claim that salvation is earned by human actions. Neither of these two teachings is correct.

Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is at the heart of our Christianity: “*For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift— not from works, so that no one can boast.*” ([Ephesians 2:8–9](#)). It is plurally important to understand three words here: salvation, grace and faith.

Since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, sin has entered the world, eternally separating human from God in hell. As sin destines each person to spiritual death ([Romans 6:23](#)), we must be delivered from sin and its death penalty in order to live and restore our relationship with God, i.e., Salvation. Where did salvation come from? Salvation is a gift from God by His grace alone without man's efforts or deeds! God reconciled us to Himself by giving Christ to die in our place ([Romans 5:8-11](#)). It is not of man's works but of God's grace ([2 Corinthians 5:18-21](#)). Grace is therefore an unearned, undeserved and unmerited favour/gift of God ([Philippians 3:9](#)) bestowed on us through His love ([Ephesians 2:4–5](#); [Titus 3:4–5](#) ). How do we receive this grace of salvation? Through faith in Jesus Christ (as God in flesh) and His atonement for our sins ([John 3:16](#); [Ephesians 2:8](#), [Hebrews 11:1](#)). It is important to note, however, that even faith is not something we generate on our own. Faith, like grace, is the gift of God ([Ephesians 2:8](#)) that He bestows upon us in order to redeem us from sin and deliver us from its consequences. This means that Salvation belongs to the LORD alone ([Psalm 3:8](#)) and not from our efforts. No human action can make a person righteous before our holy and sinless God. No one can earn or deserve salvation, no matter how “religious” they are or how meritorious their work seems to be.

So, if I have faith, don’t I need works? Scripture makes it clear that faith without works is dead ([James 2:26](#)). In fact, before we are saved, our works are done in the flesh and cannot please God; even our most “*righteous*” actions are far from living up to the glory of God (see [Romans 3:20](#) and [Isaiah 64:6](#)). In other words, Christian works are the result of salvation and as such lack of works reveals an unchanged life or a spiritually dead heart. As saving faith in Christ results in a transformed life, it is therefore demonstrated by the works we do. Works are not the cause of salvation but the evidence of salvation. If you have ever encountered hyper-grace teachers who emphasize faith alone without works, you understand that it is false faith that is dead. Apostle Paul echoes James' words in [1 Corinthians 6:9–10](#), emphasizing that good works are expected of a saved life. So, it is clear that anyone who claims to be a Christian but has no works/fruit has a false or dead faith and is not saved.

Many people profess to be Christians, but their lives and priorities indicate otherwise. Speaking of them, Jesus put it this way: “*You’ll recognize them by their fruit..... Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.....*” ([Matthew 7:16-23](#)). In the same vein, the apostle Paul, speaking particularly of the people of our age, prophesied a domination of people “*holding to the form of godliness but denying its power*” ([2 Timothy 3:5](#)). The general idea here is the pretence of being a Christian but with the refusal to do God's will or disobedience to the truth. It is not surprising that many religious people would insist on having their salvation at heart rather than manifesting it in works. Is this a saving faith? By stubbornly clinging to our false claims, we curse our lives with unteachable hearts ([Proverbs 26:12](#)).

There are mistakes that usually happen: Some people claim to be Christians because they grew up in Christian families and participate in church services, but never expressed any desire to walk with God and/or live in blatant sin. There are also people who believe that as long as they confessed in public or prayed a prayer: “*I accept Jesus...*”, then they are saved no matter what. Another group of people profess a faith but hold to various ungodly styles: unrepentant liar, thief, adulterer, to name a few. In fact, they have an empty profession of faith that does not result in a life of obedience to Chris, in reality a dead faith that cannot save.

Many people make the outward gesture of giving their lives to Christ, but no lifestyle change follows. It is biblically inconsistent to say that someone has been saved but has not changed. When a dark heart receives the light of salvation, it is illuminated ([John 12:46](#)). Priorities change, desires change, perspectives shift, and life appears clearly for the first time. If the darkness of sin persists, we can rightly assume that no light has come on. If we truly want to live in the Kingdom of God, we must examine ourselves with a repentant heart, not trying to conform ourselves to Christians when we are not ([Romans 12:2](#)).

Overall, living a moral life is not enough for salvation. Salvation is only by faith in Jesus and not by the works of the law. Good works do not produce salvation. Good works are the product of salvation. Although we cannot be saved by our good works, when we are saved, we will produce good works. A misunderstanding of the relationship between faith and works comes from not understanding what the Bible teaches about salvation. The moment we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we receive the Holy Spirit ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#)) as God's mark of Salvation ([Ephesians 1:13-14](#)). This baptism of the Spirit makes us newborn, that is, born again of the Holy Spirit. Paul is so clear that if a person does not have the Spirit, he does not belong to Christ ([Romans 8:9](#)). Therefore, the possession of the Spirit is an identifying factor of the possession of salvation. The new life in Christ grows, and we “*abide in Him*” and allow Him to reproduce His character in us ([John 15:4](#)). When we have Him, we bear fruit since we are no longer controlled by our sinful nature but by the Holy Spirit.

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